

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

INFO OCT-01 NEA-09 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-03 H-02

INR-07 L-02 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 IO-10 OMB-01 SAM-01 TRSE-00 /076 W

----- 002860

R 200028Z MAR 75

FM AMEMBASSY MANILA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1479

AMEMBASSY CAIRO BY POUCH

AMEMBASSY JAKARTA

AMEMBASSY JIDDA BY POUCH

AMEMBASSY KUALA LUMPUR

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L MANILA 3502

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

(DEPT MAY WISH PASS CAIRO/JIDDA WHEN MINIMIZE LIFTED)

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PINS, PFOR, RP, XF

SUBJECT: CONTROLLED PHILIPPINE PRESS ADOPTS MORE OPTIMISITC
LINE TOWARD RESUMPTION OF JIDDAH TALKS

REF: A. MANILA 3367

B. MANILA A-74

BEGIN SUMMARY: MARCH 16 "POOLED EDITORIAL" IN ALL MANILA
PAPERS (TEXT BEING POUCHED DEPARTMENT) INDICATES CHANGE IN BOP
LINE ON JIDDAH TALKS WHICH NOW PICTURED AS THE BEGINNING OF A
COMPLEX CONCILIATORY EFFORT, RATHER THAN (AS IN PREVIOUS COM-
MENTARY) A FAILURE. EDITORIAL STATES THAT "WE LOOK FORWARD
WITH HOPE" TO RESUMPTION OF TALKS IN APRIL. EDITORIAL
DOES NOT RETREAT FROM SUBSTANCE OF GOP REJECTION OF MNLF
"AUTONOMOUS REGIONAL STATE" CONCEPT AND REFERS TO REBEL LEADERS
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AS "SECESSIONISTS" THROUGHOUT. PREDICTABLY IT MAKES NO

MENTION OF ONGOING EFFORTS TO IMPROVE GOVERNMENT MILITARY POSITION IN SOUTH. ALONG WITH FIRST LADY VISITS TO CAIRO AND ALGIERS IT INDICATES DESIRE TO PERSUADE BOTH ISLAMIC POWERS AND LOCAL PUBLIC OF MAXIMUM GOP REASONABLENESS PRIOR TO CONVENING OF CAIRO ISLAMIC SUMMIT IN MAY. END SUMMARY.

1. IN POOLED EDITORIAL PUBLISHED MARCH 16 IN ALL MAJOR MANILA DAILIES GOP ACTING THROUGH CONTROLLED PRESS MODIFIED EARLIER PUBLIC PESSIMISM REGARDING RESUMPTION OF TALKS WITH MORO NATIONAL LIBERATION FRONT (MNLF) IN JIDDAH SCHEDULED FOR APRIL. PREVIOUS ANALYSIS HAD REFERRED TO FIRST ROUND OF TALKS AS FAILURE AND PRESIDENT MARCOS HAD PUBLICLY STATED (MOST RECENTLY AT MARCH 1 PRESS CONFERENCE) THAT HE WOULD PREFER TO HAVE THEM RESUME IN AN ASIAN SITE. NEW LINE AS SET FORTH IN EDITORIAL DOES NOT SUGGEST ALTERATION IN SUBSTANCE OF GOP POSITION BUT DOES (IN COMMENTARY ON EARLIER ROUND OF TALKS) ACCENTUATE THE POSITIVE. EDITORIAL TERMS THEM A "MAJOR PUSH TO BRING PEACE TO THE TROUBLED SOUTH", SAYS CONTACT WITH THE "SECESSIONIST LEADERS" WAS "AN ACHIEVEMENT BY ITSELF", AND STATES "WE LOOK FORWARD WITH HOPE TO THE RECONVENING OF THE TALKS IN APRIL."

2. BULK OF EDITORIAL DOES NOT DIFFER FROM PREVIOUS GOVERNMENT (OR GOVERNMENT-INSPIRED) COMMENTARY. EDITORIAL STRESSES COMPLEXITY OF THE MUSLIM PROBLEM, ROOTED IN SHORTCOMINGS OF PRE-MARTIAL LAW "OLD SOCIETY". IT NOTES THAT JIDDAH TALKS ALLOWED GOP TO BRIEF "SECESSIONISTS" ON NEW SOCIO-ECONOMIC PROGRAMS DESIGNED TO UPLIFT MUSLIMS. IT REITERATES CHARGE THAT "FOREIGN ENTITIES" AND NOT REBEL LEADERS THEMSELVES WERE RESPONSIBLE FOR MNLF'S NON-RESPONSE TO GOP PRESENTATION AT JIDDAH. ACCORDING TO EDITORIAL, REBEL DEMAND FOR "AUTONOMOUS REGIONAL STATE" CREATED FROM PHILIPPINE TERRITORY AND WITH AN ARMY WAS AN UNACCEPTABLE EFFORT TO CREATE "A NEW POWER STRUCTURE." HOWEVER, TALKS "COULD NOT BE CONSIDERED TO HAVE BROKEN DOWN" BUT WERE ONLY "RECESSED" BECAUSE OF FAILURE TO REACH AGREEMENT.

3. EDITORIAL DISINGENUOUSLY DEPLORES FACT THAT DURING JIDDAH TALKS REBELS REJECTED PHILIPPINE PROPOSAL FOR AN IMMEDIATE END TO "ACTS OF DESTRUCTION" BY BOTH SIDES PRIOR

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TO AGREEMENT ON OTHER "VITAL ISSUES". COMMENT: SO FAR AS WE ARE AWARE, ONLY SUCH PROPOSAL WAS PART OF GOP "PRELIMINARY UNDERSTANDING" TO HAVE BEEN VALID ONLY AFTER COUNTERSIGNING BY PRESIDENT MARCOS AND "OTHER REBEL GROUPS" IN SOUTHERN PHILIPPINES--CONDITIONS WHICH MNLF REPS WERE HARDLY LIKELY TO ACCEPT (SEE REFAIR PARA II.A.1.) END COMMENT.

4. IN CLOSING, EDITORIAL STATES THAT FEB. 27 REFERENDUM PROVIDED "OVERWHELMING MANDATE" FOR PRESIDENT'S REJECTION OF SECESSIONIST DEMANDS. IT EXPRESSES GRATITUDE TO EGYPTIAN PRESIDENT SADAT FOR HIS ALLEGED SUPPORT OF GOP'S REFUSAL TO COUNTENANCE TERRITORIAL DISMEMBERMENT AND CONCLUDES WITH REMINDER THAT DESIRE TO CONCILIATE AND NEGOTIATE SHOULD NOT RESULT IN AMPUTATION OF TERRITORY "HOWEVER SMALL" FROM PHILIPPINES.

5. COMMENT. AS NOTED REFTTEL, EDITORIAL (ALONG WITH FIRST LADY'S VISITS TO EGYPT AND ALGERIA) IS PART OF ONGOING EFFORT IN PREPARATION FOR FORTHCOMING CAIRO ISLAMIC SUMMIT TO CONVINCE OWN CITIZENRY AND MUSLIM POWERS THAT GOP IS BENDING OVER BACKWARDS TO BE REASONABLE. EDITORIAL STRESSES GOP COMPLIANCE WITH RESOLUTION 18 OF 1974 KUALA LUMPUR ISLAMIC SUMMIT URGING NEGOTIATIONS WITH THE MNLF. IN CONTRAST TO MANY PREVIOUS PUBLIC STATEMENTS IT DOES NOT MENTION GOP'S STANDARD CONTENTION THAT MNLF IS ONLY ONE OF NUMEROUS CONTENDING MUSLIM REBEL GROUPS. NOR, FOR OBVIOUS REASONS, DOES IT REFER TO ARMED FORCES CURRENT EFFORTS TO ENHANCE GOP MILITARY POSITION IN MINDANAO VIS-A-VIS MNLF BEFORE RESUMPTION OF TALKS.
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